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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on goal-directed student life programming (all programming of activities occurring outside of regular school hours) for residential and day students. First, the need for change in student life programming is documented, noting discrepancies between what employers need and students' skills. The importance of establishing desired outcomes for students is stressed, with examples from the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) both in Washington, DC. These outcomes address: (1) essential knowledge and skills; (2) linguistic and communicative competency; (3) thinking and cooperative skills; (4) emotional intelligence; and (5) life-plan goals. Five elements are identified as critical aspects of successful student life programming (safety, education, community, self-esteem, and structure). The five KDES/MSSD outcomes are then used to illustrate how outcomes can guide specific student life programming initiatives. (Contains 16 references.) (DB)

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Student Life in the New Millennium:
Empowering Education for Deaf Students

by
Katherine A. Jankowski, Ph.D.

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Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center
Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C.

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Sharing Ideas

The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's (formerly Pre-College National Mission Programs) "Sharing Ideas" series is comprised of working or occasional papers and videos of interest to parents and teachers of deaf and hard of hearing children, researchers, school administrators, support service personnel, and policy makers. Works in the series are often prepared for a specific 'occasion,' and include papers, presentations, or final reports that address a need in the field or contribute to the growing body of knowledge about educating deaf and hard of hearing children. The intent of the series is to act as a clearinghouse for sharing information from a number of sources.

These widely disseminated papers cover a broad range of timely topics, from describing innovative teaching strategies to reviewing the literature in an area of inquiry to summarizing the results of a research study. In every case, there is a common focus: improving the quality of education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Clerc Center welcomes feedback about the concepts presented, particularly in the case of 'working papers,' which often represent works in progress or express the views or experiences of an author.

Researchers, graduate students, parents, and teachers are encouraged to send proposals for review and possible inclusion in the Sharing Ideas series. Submissions to the series are reviewed by content experts before acceptance for publication as Clerc Center products.

We Want Your Input!

This working paper was based on a keynote address given at the conference, "Enhancing Student Life for Deaf Students into the 21st Century," at Gallaudet University on June 18, 1998. The talk was meant to inspire goal-directed programming, to share some ideas, and to open a dialogue that would elicit more ideas, strategies, and creative solutions. We would like, therefore, for you to share your input or reactions, as well as the ideas and solutions that have worked to enhance Student Life in your school. Please fax or send your comments and questions to us, along with information about how the author can reach you for further discussion, in care of the National Deaf Education Network and Clearinghouse managing editor (at the address on the back of the title page). We are interested in any and all comments, criticisms, and contributions.

About the Author

Dr. Katherine A. Jankowski currently provides leadership to the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's two demonstration schools—Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf—both located on the campus of Gallaudet University. Previously, Dr. Jankowski was superintendent at the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf and, before that, at the Central North Carolina School for the Deaf. She has also worked as an assistant professor in the Communication Arts department at Gallaudet University, a program director at a non-profit organization, a counselor, and a sign communication specialist.

Dr. Jankowski graduated from Gallaudet University with a bachelor's degree in psychology. She went on to earn a master's degree in counseling from the University of Arizona and a doctorate in public communication from the University of Maryland.

She is the author of *Deaf Empowerment: Emergence, Struggle, and Rhetoric*, and has published several articles. She has traveled extensively as a lecturer and consultant on issues related to education, empowerment, and communication.

Acknowledgments

This paper is dedicated to all Student Life staff who have committed themselves to an all-around education for their students.

Thanks to Shawn Mahshie for the many hours she spent going over the paper and providing feedback on content and organization throughout the process; to Shawn, Tim Frelich, and Betsy Meynardie for a stimulating dialogue regarding the appropriate labeling of "Student Life" programs; to Dr. Allen Sussman, Mike Finneran, and Leslie Proctor for reviewing and commenting on the paper; to Tim Frelich for both reviewing and also discussing aspects of the paper with MSSD Student Life staff; and to Susan O'Brien for technical assistance.

Student Life in the New Millennium

Bringing Student Life to the Forefront

I am pleased to be addressing you at this very important conference. Most of you are here because you are keenly aware that Student Life personnel play an important part in developing the whole student. Unfortunately, however, most of us are also too well aware that the focus of our students' education often tends to be almost entirely on the academic portion of the knowledge, skills, and experiences each student will need. As we enter this new millennium, all the information we have about the success of graduates points to an urgent need to look at the role Student Life must play in creating a program of empowering education for deaf and hard of hearing people

Student Life, as used here, refers to all programming that takes place outside normal school hours, including extracurricular activities (referred to as After School Programs), athletics, dormitory activities, and social events. In most instances, students benefiting from Student Life programs are residential students who go home on weekends or during breaks when school is closed. However, there are also many commuter students (those who do not reside in the dorm) who benefit from Student Life programs.

Many of you clearly recognize that the individuals, attitudes, and events young people encounter outside the classroom play a critical role in shaping their lives. But how exactly is Student Life programming being carried out? And is it done system-

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atically? My observation is that schools often leave it to chance and/or to the whims of a few creative people with wonderful ideas and boundless energy.

Effective programming in Student Life requires exactly that: a fully-planned, well-coordinated ***program*** in which the whole student is taken into consideration. In such a program, there would be consistency in goals and close communication between classroom teachers and Student Life personnel. In such an educational community, the Student Life component would be considered by parents, teachers, staff, and students to be a vital part of each student's education. The role of Student Life personnel would be recognized to be as critical as that of teachers.

This presentation is meant to be a starting place for considering what needs to be done—and for encouraging a dialogue among schools about what realistically CAN be done—to provide students with a comprehensive learning environment through Student Life programming.

The Need for Change

Why is a renewed focus on Student Life necessary? Consider these facts...

1) In 1993, there were 40,578 deaf people receiving disability benefits, and 52,703 receiving SSI...making a total of almost 100,000 deaf people receiving benefits, rather than working (Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan, 1996).

2) Data from 1991 shows that deaf people are over-represented in blue collar and manual labor jobs, under-represented in white collar jobs, and earn lower incomes than their hearing peers, even when their level of education is higher (Rittenhouse, Johnson, Overton, Freeman, and Jaussi, 1991; Welsh, 1991).

3) Vocational Rehabilitation counselors have heavy caseloads with deaf clients who need improved literacy, social, and independent living skills (Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan, 1996).

4) Studies from thirty years ago tell us that employers were more likely to hire people with various disabilities than deaf people (Rickard, Triandis, and Patterson, 1963; Williams, 1972). Deaf people were only rated higher than epileptics, former prisoners, and former mental patients. The situation has not improved significantly. In 1994, a poll taken for *Deaf Life* magazine asked deaf people if they had experienced discrimination. Of the 321 respondents, a resounding 100% said, "Yes."

Clearly, this picture looks bleak. While the deaf community can proudly point to increasing numbers of successful deaf people on many levels of achievement (as lawyers, administrators, police officers, doctors, etc.), educators' job is to ensure that *all* deaf students are afforded the best educational opportunities both in the classroom and through Student Life programming. If we look at how schools are going about preparing deaf and hard of hearing students for the work world, we see that activities undertaken in the classroom do not and cannot address all of the skills needed in the workplace.

Results of studies comparing employer expectations with employee readiness indicate that much needs to be done. For instance, *USA Today* (June 1997) published the results of a survey that looked at whether or not students are well prepared for specific job skills:

Skill areas that are important in the workplace	Students' opinions of whether they are "very well prepared"	Employers' opinions of whether the same students were "very well prepared" based on actual readiness for task
Ability to meet deadlines	62%	8%
Oral communications	57%	9%
Written communications	45%	6%
Basic math skills	62%	8%
Basic computer skills	28%	14%
Ability to work in diverse groups	66%	13%

Results of another study, based on interviews with consultants, employers and employees conducted by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) in 1991, demonstrate major gaps between what schools teach and what the workplace requires:

What Schools Teach	What the Workplace Requires
Writing to show mastery of knowledge	Writing for a range of purposes (e.g., to inform, persuade, explain how to do something, soften blows, make recommendations, sell, etc.)
Writing essays, reports, poetry, research papers, stories	Writing reports, brochures, letters, memos, proposals, messages, logs, news releases, personnel evaluations, minutes, etc.
Deadlines and distractions controlled by teachers	Deadlines and distractions often unavoidable
Writing for an audience of one—the teacher	Writing for a variety of audiences (e.g., supervisors, clients, co-workers, subordinates, general public, etc.)

Likewise, many of the qualities and skills that Fortune 500 companies seek in employees are among those that need to be developed in a variety of contexts, both inside and outside the classroom:

From a list of 13 qualities, among the top five are:

- teamwork
- problem solving
- interpersonal skills
- oral communication
- listening

My analysis of this information from the mainstream and my assessment of academic and Student Life programming brings me to some urgent conclusions. Since employers are not flocking to hire deaf people, it is our responsibility to foster an environment that produces graduates who:

- are marketable when they enter the workforce and who have had real world experiences to prove to prospective employers that they have what it takes;
- can handle a higher level of complexity in the tasks they undertake and work in a variety of settings in which they independently determine the steps they need to get from point a to point b;
- can think for themselves, problem solve and work with a variety of people in different contexts.

While many skills can be addressed in an academic environment, the classroom alone is insufficient to prepare students for life after graduation. In order to truly develop and integrate the qualities and skills employers seek, students need to practice, experiment, and hone their skills in an environment that is as much like the real world as possible. Schools cannot ignore the need to develop these skills and abilities in students or the need for well-trained staff and well-coordinated programs.

Outcomes and Benchmarks

More and more schools are establishing a set of expectations for the skills students will be expected to master by the time they graduate. It is no longer sufficient to just expect students to pass courses. The information I shared above clearly demonstrates that students need a wide variety of skills and abilities, in addition to knowledge. Having high academic achievement test scores will not allow someone to keep a job if he or she is disrespectful to the boss, cannot work with others, or cannot approach a complex task independently.

Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) recently went through a process of establishing desired outcomes for our students. After collecting input from all the stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and the business community, a final list of five outcomes was developed. When students graduate from MSSD, they must demonstrate that they have mastered each of the five outcomes.

In order to ensure that students are making steady progress throughout the grades as they move toward graduation, their skills will be measured against benchmarks. These benchmarks—soon to be developed at KDES and MSSD—will serve as indicators of the level of skill needed prior to entering the next grade level. Our five outcomes are listed below:

KDES and MSSD Student Outcomes

Students will be expected to:

I. Acquire essential knowledge and skills, including those identified in the national standards (Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, the Arts, Economics, Health, Physical Education, Technology, Life Skills, and Social Studies), as well as Deaf Studies, and be able to apply them in planning and carrying out complex projects.

II. Achieve, to the best of their ability, a full repertoire of linguistic and communicative competencies to use at their disposal in interactions with both deaf and hearing people.

III. Be critical, creative, and reflective thinkers, decision makers, and problem solvers who effectively cooperate and collaborate to achieve common goals in life situations and groupings that reflect cultural, social, and academic diversity.

IV. Display emotional intelligence through a positive attitude, respect, and healthy patterns of behavior toward themselves and others.

V. Design, refine, and initiate a life plan based on self-exploration and experience that incorporates a knowledge of their rights, available resources, and effective self-advocacy.

Common Themes

It is interesting to note how closely the outcomes developed through this consensus process correlate to the broader skills determined by SCANS (1991):

- **basic skills**—ability to read, write, do math, listen, speak
- **thinking skills**—ability to think creatively, make decisions, solve problems

- **personal qualities**—responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, honesty

In addition, the outcomes developed by KDES and MSSD indicate important similarities to the five elements deemed by the International Center for Residential Education to be most successful in developing strong academic, vocational, and social skills: safety, education, community, self-esteem, and structure (Goldsmith, 1995). This organization believes that residential programming plays a critical role in developing many of the skills that employers seek. As they have stated, the following five elements are critical aspects of successful Student Life programming:

- **Safety**—providing a physically and emotionally safe environment, so students feel they can trust adults to protect them from physical and psychological harm

- **Education**—providing a supportive environment for academics that increases motivation and provides formal and informal opportunities to study and learn

- **Community**—providing a sense of belonging to a community, rather than an institution; encouraging students to participate in and receive support from their community; (participating in community service is one of most powerful tools to increase self-esteem as it shows students how they can make a difference)

- **Self-esteem**—providing a well-planned residential program that can boost strengths and abilities, and form a positive identity in many economically and socially disadvantaged students who enter residential schools suffering from low self-esteem

- **Structure**—providing a structured daily regimen

Outcome-Driven Programming

I would now like to focus on how Student Life and other units within a school might work together to develop programming that is in many ways guided by those outcomes that have been determined as most important by the school community. I will use the KDES/MSSD outcomes as case in point, expanding on types of programming that might be implemented to support each objective.

OUTCOME I:

Students will acquire essential knowledge and skills, including those identified in the national standards (Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, the Arts, Economics, Health, Physical Education, Technology, Life Skills, and Social Studies), as well as Deaf Studies, and be able to apply them in planning and carrying out complex projects.

To ensure that students have ample opportunity to develop a strong academic foundation, Student Life personnel need to provide programs that support studying and learning. Such programs should:

- Offer daily study periods outside of school time.

  ⇒ To send students the message that studying and learning are valuable skills

  ⇒ To help students develop good study habits

  ⇒ To teach students to budget their time wisely

  ⇒ To encourage a strong sense of responsibility

  ⇒ To support students in developing increasing levels of responsibility as they mature. (Some schools, such as Madeira school in McLean, Virginia, for example, provide opportunities for students to increase levels of independence: freshmen study in the cafeteria, sophomores study in the library, juniors in their rooms, and seniors in a place of their choice.)

- Provide tutoring by individuals skilled in different content areas. Schools can recruit nearby college students, deaf adults, or senior citizens to come in as tutors, or train other students to become peer tutors.

⇒ To ensure that students receive support and guidance in all academic areas and are exposed to different role models, mentors, and teaching styles

- Create innovative enrichment programs such as the one offered at KDES and MSSD, in which students have the opportunity to take special topics courses, such as boat building, leadership training, computer literacy, ballology (the history of the various balls used in athletics), and other fun, interesting, and challenging courses.

  ⇒ To provide students with the benefit of learning about topics that may not normally be taught in classrooms

- Ensure availability of state of the art technology after school hours.

  ⇒ To facilitate students in continuing their learning after classes

  ⇒ To offer ample opportunity for students to become computer-literate

  ⇒ To provide access to information and resources

OUTCOME II:

Students will achieve, to the best of their ability, a full repertoire of linguistic and communicative competencies to use at their disposal in interactions with both deaf and hearing people in a wide variety of situations.

Both English and American Sign Language (ASL) play extremely important roles in the development of communicative competence. Effective Student Life programming can offer plentiful opportunities for all students to develop strong English and ASL skills, working to provide an environment rich in literacy development. A survey of literacy practices in residential settings at 26 schools for the deaf demonstrates the need for more varied literacy applications, such as group storybook reading and other ways to maximize literacy development (Wilson Gillespie and Twardosz, 1996).

In order to better assist students in developing linguistic and communicative competencies, Student Life personnel need to be exposed to the results of research on emerging and beginning literacy. Clay (1972), for example, found that of first-grade hearing readers during their first year of instruction, superior readers read an

average of 20,000 words, average readers read an average of 10-15,000 words, and emerging readers read an average of 5,000 words. That means that most of these children have been been exposed to thousands of words, to many new ideas, to the way stories work, to what beginnings of stories look like, to the concept that problems happen to characters, and that resolutions occur (Livingston, 1997). This exposure helps develop reading skills and, from this early development, more experienced readers are able to predict endings or what might happen next, and this helps propel them through the story (Livingston, 1997). Inexperienced readers, on the other hand, see isolated concepts not related to each other, and later have difficulty telling or writing stories.

We know that most deaf students read much less than the hearing students in Clay's study. While we expect schools educating deaf students to take on a greater role in teaching literacy, this in itself is insufficient. We know that many parents read to their children, and this is as crucial as the reading exposure they receive in classrooms (Trelease, 1989). Deaf children who are not read to often are at a distinct disadvantage. Residential students who are not being read to in the dorm have the same disadvantage.

It is, therefore, incumbent on Student Life staff to **assume a proactive role in developing English and ASL literacy**. This can be done in the following ways:

- Provide a print-rich environment, posting articles, announcements, captioned photos, etc., on bulletin boards and hallways in the dormitory; have access to the library during evening hours and have books available in the dorms; have newspapers readily available for students; post written pieces about current events and deaf-related events or related to themes being studied in the classroom.

  ⇒ To expose students to an environment that promotes literacy

  ⇒ To increase students' access to written information about current events and deaf-related events

  ⇒ To promote interest in literature and other kinds of written materials by reading aloud in ASL, having discussions about what they are reading, and using supplemental activities like movies or field trips to broaden context and deepen understanding

- Provide an environment that promotes independent reading. This is an important consideration, as many students say they don't read in the dorms because socializing often seems to take precedence over reading.

- Encourage students to place a high value on reading, to continue to develop their literacy skills outside the classroom.

The importance of reading aloud has been well established in the literature (Trelease, 1989). Because students' subject matter may be commensurate with their ASL competence but too difficult for the level to which they have progressed in reading English as their second language, Student Life personnel can greatly assist in the development of literacy skills by undertaking the following:

- Establish a daily routine for read-alouds.

  ⇒ To convey content from grade-level texts

  ⇒ To promote language and concept development

  ⇒ To facilitate listening skills

  ⇒ To lay the foundation for writing skills

  ⇒ To encourage independent reading in students who might not normally read on their own

  ⇒ To pique their interest in reading

  ⇒ To provide them with structures and story sequencing patterns they might not otherwise be exposed to on their own

Most people probably take the development of ASL skills for granted, assuming that daily use of the language is sufficient for competency development. However, ASL development is as complex as any language, and Student Life personnel should establish an environment that goes beyond the daily use of ASL. Some ways to do this are to:

- Encourage formal presentation of information and public speaking skills by supporting practice of classroom presentations in the dorm, providing feedback to each other, and bringing in deaf adults who are skilled at public presentation or who are master storytellers.

⇒ To develop a sense of how stories and presentations given in ASL are structured and flow together

⇒ To develop story-telling, presentation, and content development/organization skills

⇒ To expose students to various aspects of Deaf culture

⇒ To develop a sense of identity

⇒ To encourage confidence in themselves

⇒ To help students learn to tell stories and give formal presentations in ASL

⇒ To expose students to skillful users of ASL in different contexts and for different purposes

⇒ To develop receptive and expressive fluency in ASL

- Encourage use of sign plays and poetry, bringing in ASL poets.

⇒ To develop creative uses of ASL

⇒ To expose students to adult role models

⇒ To develop artistic skills

⇒ To appreciate and understand structures of poetry and the richness and complexity of ASL

Employers have repeatedly stated the need for employees to have effective interpersonal skills. This would include the ability to communicate well in all kinds of contexts. Student Life personnel are in a prime position to help facilitate communicative competence in students. There are many many ways to do this. A few suggestions are given below:

- Provide plentiful opportunities for students to interact with deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people in a variety of settings, including social environments, business settings, and daily interactions such as in a bank, a doctor's office, shopping centers, etc.

⇒ To develop a high level of communicative competence in their relationships with peers, colleagues, employers, people they encounter in the community, and others with whom they come into contact

- Facilitate opportunities to use TTYs, relay services, work with interpreters, e-mail, etc. Encourage families to communicate with their children using these avenues if possible.

  ⇒ To develop interactive skills using a variety of modes

  ⇒ To learn how to communicate with hearing people in a variety of contexts (e.g., exchange programs, work experiences, volunteer opportunities, trips to the bank, etc.).

  ⇒ To become independent members of society

OUTCOME III:

Students will be critical, creative, and reflective thinkers, decision makers, and problem solvers who effectively cooperate and collaborate to achieve common goals in life situations and groupings that reflect cultural, social, and academic diversity.

Employers have stated the need for employees in today's workforce to be able to think for themselves, rather than being told what to do. Student Life programming needs to include various avenues to encourage critical thinking and problem solving skills. In addition, living in an increasingly diverse society requires the ability to work with people from various cultures and backgrounds. Student Life personnel are in a prime position to facilitate a collaborative environment among diverse student populations. To promote these skills, Student Life programs should **create opportunities to learn values,** in these and other ways:

- Provide experiences that embrace diversity, facilitate student understanding, and teach tolerance in daily interactions and in meetings; provide models of diversity in books, posters, role models, visitors; provide workshops/training; provide on-going dialogues between students.

  ⇒ To develop in students positive ways to discuss and listen to various perspectives

  ⇒ To expose students to models of various cultures

⇒ To foster an appreciation for interacting with people of various backgrounds in their daily lives

- Create opportunities for student choices and decisions as often as possible.

  ⇒ To learn through trial and error from real-life situations

- Provide opportunities for participation in athletics and intramurals.

  ⇒ To teach the value of teamwork

  ⇒ To develop in students, through practice and games, thinking and decision making skills

- Make available opportunities for participation in a variety of student organizations.

  ⇒ To develop leadership skills

  ⇒ To learn to manage their time wisely and prioritize activities

  ⇒ To learn to work with a variety of people in different contexts

  ⇒ To develop a variety of skills that will apply to their daily lives and future jobs

  ⇒ To provide opportunities for supportive peer relationships

  ⇒ To help students develop mediation and conflict-resolution skills

OUTCOME IV:

Students will display emotional intelligence, through a positive attitude, respect, and healthy patterns of behavior toward themselves and others.

There is increasing research to suggest that emotional intelligence is a better indicator of success than IQ (Goleman, 1997). A recent study illustrates that people who have low tolerance levels and who are not able to read other people's cues well, no matter how talented or intelligent, are not good candidates for workplace success (Gibbs, 1995). Apparently, those considered more successful are better able to hold

their patience for longer periods of time, control their temper, and read the cues of people with whom they interact. Student Life programs should **promote the development of emotional intelligence** in the following ways:

- Offer regular community meetings where students can discuss issues and come up with solutions.

  ⇒ To develop in students a sense of belonging and community

- Provide staff models of exemplary behavior.

  ⇒ To build patterns of appropriate behavior and interactions

- Provide safe opportunities for students to learn the consequences of their actions.

  ⇒ To develop a sense of responsibility for their actions

  ⇒ To teach that consequences, positive or negative, will occur as a result of the choices they make

- Offer peer mediation programs—not advisement, in which peer may be ill-equipped to offer advice—as a structure for safely involving both parties in working through difficulties.

  ⇒ To develop interpersonal relationships and skills

  ⇒ To increase self-esteem

  ⇒ To teach problem-solving skills

  ⇒ To improve communication skills

- Provide support services, e.g., alcohol and drug awareness, support groups, workshops/training on issues such as sexual harassment, HIV/AIDS, date rape.

  ⇒ To impart accurate information and resources on topics that impact on students' well-being

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⇒ To promote well-informed decision making by students by developing an awareness of the consequences of their choices

OUTCOME V:

Students will design, refine, and initiate a life plan based on self-exploration and experience that incorporates a knowledge of their rights, available resources, and effective self-advocacy.

Since students are likely to face discrimination and barriers in their daily interactions with society at large and in the workforce, they will be better equipped to face these challenges if they know their legal rights, are able to identify resources, and can advocate for themselves. Students will also be better prepared for their future lives if they have experienced environments that support their needs and are given opportunities to develop strategies for those that do not. Student Life personnel can **help prepare students to live independently** in the following ways:

- Provide a barrier-free environment, with fire alarm signalers in every room, TTYs with each available phone, light signalers with each phone (even if the offices belong to hearing people, as deaf people should know when the phone rings), doorbell signalers, and full communication access.

  ⇒ To assure safety

  ⇒ To educate parents and visitors of the importance of equal access

  ⇒ To promote self-advocacy skills in students by providing them with a model with which to advocate in the workplace and in the general public

- Provide a home-like environment, which includes students running errands, developing hobbies, practicing religion, conducting family responsibilities, caring for pets (some dorms allow this), reading for pleasure, having access to the refrigerator at any time, and many other things normally done at home.

  ⇒ To provide students with a functional family life to help them prepare for their own future families

  ⇒ To foster a sense of responsibility in students

  ⇒ To help students develop a sense of belonging

- Provide opportunities for community relations, which could include cleaning and beautification of the dorms and campus grounds, a mentoring program with adults from the general community, and interactions with community members under a variety of circumstances.

  ⇒ To create a support system for each student

  ⇒ To develop a variety of skills

  ⇒ To nurture a sense of pride in their community

- Provide opportunities for students to become involved in community service.

  ⇒ To foster the spirit of volunteerism

  ⇒ To teach civic responsibility

- Provide orientation to the community (training on the uses of various transportation, taxi, bus, shuttle service); information on available resources (interpreting agencies, mental health services, etc.)

  ⇒ To help students prepare for independent living

- Encourage family ties by hosting special events or dinner nights; sending out regular newsletters; encouraging students to write letters, send e-mail, faxes to their families; holding family weekends; creating a home page on the computer network; inviting parents to visit the dorms; establishing parent apartments; and inviting parents to come and talk to students about their jobs, as some of many examples.

  ⇒ To facilitate students in bonding with their families, even though they may not see their families on a daily basis

  ⇒ To expose students to the ways families bond, so that they can do the same when they begin their own families

Foster students' interests and abilities by helping them explore a variety of career options, inviting adults from their fields of interest to talk to the students, and bringing them to sites of jobs in areas of interest.

⇒ To allow students to explore and expand on their areas of interests and abilities

- Provide students with opportunities for work experience.

  ⇒ To teach job search skills

  ⇒ To promote successful interpersonal skills in relationships with colleagues and employers

  ⇒ To expose students to authentic work experiences

  ⇒ To increase the likelihood that students will be able to find future jobs.

  ⇒ To increase by two to three times the likelihood that students will hold competitive jobs a year after leaving school (Education Daily, 1997)

- Provide opportunities for student-run enterprises.

  ⇒ To develop in students a variety of work-related skills in an authentic environment

- Provide a curriculum that fosters independent living skills, that includes money management; banking; use of TTY, relay, etc.; how to find an apartment/make a deposit; understanding utilities/leasing/rent; buying a house/mortgage; menu planning/food shopping.

  ⇒ To enable students to better prepare for life after school

Conclusion

As you can see, Student Life personnel could play a very significant role in shaping the lives of young deaf and hard of hearing people. As we approach the new millennium, it is crucial that we design full-fledged Student Life programming that integrates academics, transition and residential components. It is our responsibility to prepare all deaf and hard of hearing students for lifelong learning and success.

In recent years, mainstreaming has taken precedence. However, in some states, the pendulum appears to be swinging back in favor of residential schools. Minnesota just passed a bill to establish residential schools for low-income students, with the idea that providing them with support will be less costly than a possible future of dependency on welfare systems or incarceration. The easy passage of this bill tells me it is a very good time for residential schools to be models for others by offering exemplary Student Life programs that produce graduates who are successful contributors to society.

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The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's "Sharing Ideas" series includes a variety of short papers of interest to parents and teachers of deaf children, researchers, school administrators, support service personnel, and policy makers. These widely disseminated works cover a broad range of timely topics--from the results of research to descriptions of innovative teaching strategies--with a focus on improving the quality of education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

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The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center is comprised of two federally mandated demonstration schools for students from birth through age 21 who are deaf. Located on the campus of Gallaudet University, these schools work in collaboration with a national network of exemplary programs and professionals to identify, research, develop, evaluate, and disseminate innovative curricula, materials, educational strategies, and technologies for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Clerc Center also provides training and technical assistance to families and programs throughout the United States, and serves as a model individualized educational program, working in close partnership with its students and their families.

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